

MASSAGE THERAPY ON SPORTS INJURIES

Submitted by H.SUDHAR

Director of Physical Education, Murugappa Polytechnic College, Avadi, Chennai

Massage is the manipulation of the body's soft tissues. Massage techniques are commonly applied with hands, fingers, elbows, knees, forearms, feet, or a device. The purpose of massage is generally for the treatment of body stress or pain. A person professionally trained to give massages is traditionally known as a masseur (male) or a masseuse (female) in European countries.

In the United States, these individuals are often referred to as massage therapists because they must be certified and licensed as "Licensed Massage Therapists". In professional settings, clients are treated while lying on a massage table, sitting in a massage chair, or lying on a mat on the floor.

There are many different modalities in the massage industry including but not limited to: Swedish, deep tissue, structural integration, trigger point, manual lymphatic drainage, sports massage, Thai massage, and medical massage.

The massage therapist will use a combination of:

- kneading
- long, flowing strokes in the direction of the heart
- deep circular motions
- vibration and tapping
- passive joint movement techniques

View massage techniques for specific sports injuries:

- Plantar fasciitis massage
- Ankle sprain massage
- Achilles tendon massage
- Shin splints massage
- Calf strain massage
- Jumper's knee massage
- Hamstring strain massage
- Thigh strain massage
- Groin strain massage
- AC joint sprain massage
- Tennis elbow massage

May treat all types of sports and work-related injuries and can help, to get back to our daily activities. Common injuries treat include:

- Back pain
- Concussion
- Foot pain
- Joint sprains and pains (ankle, hip, knee and shoulder)
- Muscle strains
- Neck pain
- Osteoarthritis
- Overuse injuries such as rotator cuff overuse, tendonitis and stress fractures
- Plantar fasciitis (heel pain)
- Repetitive stress injuries (like carpal tunnel syndrome)
- Sciatica (symptoms including lower back pain, leg numbness, hip and knee pain)
- Simple or stress fractures
- Tendinitis

Beneficial Effects

Peer-reviewed medical research has shown that the benefits of massage include pain relief, reduced trait anxiety and depression, and temporarily reduced blood pressure, heart rate, and state of anxiety. Additional testing has shown an immediate increase and expedited recovery periods for muscle performance. Theories behind what massage might do include enhanced skeletal muscle regrowth and remodeling, blocking nociception (gate control theory), activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which may stimulate the release of endorphins and serotonin, preventing fibrosis or scar tissue, increasing the flow of lymph, and improving sleep. Massage is hindered from reaching the gold standard of scientific research, which includes placebo-controlled and double blind clinical trials.

Developing a "sham" manual therapy for massage would be difficult since even light touch massage could not be assumed to be completely devoid of effects on the subject. It would also be difficult to find a subject that would not notice that they were getting less of a massage, and it would be impossible to blind the therapist.

Massage can employ randomized controlled trials, which are published in peer reviewed medical journals. This type of study could increase the credibility of the profession because it displays that purported therapeutic effects are reproducible

lower Leg & Ankle Massage

Calf strain – Sports massage for calf strains can be used after the initial acute phase has finished. Do not massage in the first 5 days post-injury.

Shin splints – Sports massage & myofascial release for shin splints/medial tibial stress may be beneficial after the first 3 days or so. It is important to avoid the bone as this may worsen symptoms.

Ankle sprain – Cross friction massage can be applied to ankle ligaments can help prevent and realign scar tissue. Massage can also be applied to the calf muscles to aid recovery.

Achilles tendonitis – Sports massage techniques can help with the treatment of Achilles tendon pain. Massage mobilizes the tissues and helps align scar tissue.

Knee Injury Massage

Jumper's knee – Sports massage can help with treating patella tendinopathy (jumper's knee). In particular, cross friction massage is applied to the patella tendon.

Thigh & Groin Massage

Hamstring strain – Sports Massage or soft tissue massage or soft tissue massage can be used at this stage but the pressure must be very light and superficial, to begin with, but can gradually get deeper as the days/weeks pass.

Thigh strain – Sports massage may be beneficial after the initial acute stage.

Groin strain – Sports massage may be beneficial once the acute stage has passed. Caution is advised as massaging an injury too soon may increase the bleeding and may make the injury worse.

Arm & Elbow Massage

Tennis elbow – Massage can be a useful treatment for tennis elbow, particularly more chronic conditions. In particular cross friction massage of the tendon insertion but only once the initial inflammation has settled (after 5 days) is done.

Shoulder

AC joint sprain massage – cross friction massage techniques for the acromio-clavicular joint at the top of the shoulder.

Conclusion

Sports massage can play an important part in the life of any sportsman or woman whether they are injured or not. Massage has a number of benefits both physical, physiological and psychological.

References

Anderson MK, Foundations of Athletic Training: Prevention, Assessment, and Management. 4th ed. In: Therapeutic Modalities. Lippincott Williams and Wilkins. 2008

James SL, Abate D, Abate KH, et al. Global, regional, and national incidence, prevalence, and years lived with disability for 354 diseases and injuries for 195 countries and territories, 1990-2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *Lancet* 2018; 392: 1789-858.

Frontera WR. Rehabilitation of Sports Injuries: Scientific Basis. Vol X of Encyclopaedia of Sports Medicine. An IOC Medical Committee Publication in collaboration with the International Federation of Sports Medicine. Blackwell Science Ltd. 2003

Beam, Joel W. Rehabilitation including sport-specific functional progression for the competitive athlete. *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*. Volume 6, Issue 4. 205 - 219.

